Huge Arsenal Of Weapons Stolen in L.A.

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LOS ANGELES, July 5 (AP) —An arsenal of weapons including machine guns and grenade launchers was stolen from a National Guard armory in suburban Compton, and some authorities said today that terrorists may have done it.

An FBI agent said enough weapons were taken to equip an Army combat company.

"It is very possible it was done by an organziation such as the Symbionese Liberation Army," said Compton Police Sgt. John Pranin.

The FBI said it had no indication that the theft was carried out by such a group, but a spokesman added, "The possibility could always exist. It is a potentially dangerous situation."

Investigators said sometime between Wednesday morning and Thursday night an undetermined number of burglars sawed off a chain lock on a cyclone fence gate at the rear of the barn-like armory, cut through a metal-covered outside door, and broke through two other doors inside the armory. Investigators declined to comment on how they got through the inside doors.

The burglars then used a vacuum drill to cut through security bolts on the vault,

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where the weapons were stored in racks. Police said a truck was apparently used to haul the loot away. Truck rental agencies in the area were being checked.

Military authorities listed the stolen weapons and ammunition as: 96 M-16 rifles; seven M-60 machine guns; eight M-79 grenade launchers; one .45-caliber automatic pistol and 15 bayonets; 3,360 rounds of 5.53-mm M-16 bullets; 1,000 rounds of 7.62-mm machine gun bullets; 45 rounds of .45-caliber bullets; 40 grenades; 16 smoke grenades, and 100 riot grenades. They said 75 gas masks also were taken.

Lt. Col. Andrew Wolf, a spokesman for the California National Guard, said the firing pins and entire bolt assemblies had been removed from the guns before they were placed in the vault. Asked if the thieves could find replacement bolts at a sporting goods shop, Wolf said, "I think it would be a problem."

A silent alarm system is being installed in the armory, but work had stopped for the holiday.

Wolf said state National Guard armories are usually left unattended after normal business hours because the Army cannot afford to man them around the clock.

In Washington, the National Guard Bureau said the incident was the second break-in into a Guard arms vault this year. The other theft was in Anchorage, Alaska, with the loss of four rifles and two pistols, a bureau spokesman said

According to the bureau, the Compton vault meets Army construction standards and the disarming of the weapons by removing their firing pins is in line with standard procedure.